



# RESILIENCY

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## 10 Tips for Coping with Holiday Stress

*Syd Davidson; INNG Director of Psychological Health*

**Stress and depression can ruin your holidays and hurt your health. Being realistic, planning ahead and seeking support can help ward off stress and depression.**

Common stressors often focus on family / relationships, finances, and physical demands. If these are triggers for you, be prepared. Arm yourself with ways to counter attack these stressors

**1. Acknowledge your feelings.** Do the holidays bring up memories of lost loved ones or past relationships? It is normal to feel grief, sadness or loneliness. It is ok to cry or express your feelings.

**2. Reach out.** Family, friends, religious and social events can all provide emotional support as well as keep you and your mind busy. Volunteer; don't be alone. It is a great way to give back to your community as well as make new friends

**3. Be realistic.** People and circumstances change. Don't set yourself up for disappointment.

**4. Set aside differences.**

Try to accept people for who they are, regardless of whether or not they live up to your expectations. If you go into the holidays with this mindset, you will find you are much more relaxed and your stress level lessened.

**5. Stick to a budget.**

Easier said than done, right? Decide ahead of time how much you want to spend on gifts, food, etc. Be creative. Look for sales, make home made gifts, start a family gift exchange.

**6. Plan ahead.** Don't wait until the last minute. Set aside days to shop, bake, wrap, etc. If you are entertaining; don't forget to ask for help to set up and clean up. This will decrease your anxiety and stress.

**7. Learn to say NO.** Saying yes when you should say no can lead to resentment, anger, and feeling overwhelmed. Remember you are 1 person and can only do so much. If you believe you can not say no, remove another item from your "to do" list.

**8. Healthy Habits.** Over-indulgence is fairly normal during the holidays, however this can lead to feelings of

guilt and stress. Don't abandon healthy habits (exercise). If you don't have any, adopt some..

**9. Take a breather.** Make sure you have at least 15 minutes to yourself. Stargaze, take a walk, soak in a tub, read a book,

**10. Seek professional help if needed.** If you find yourself, sad, restless, irritable, have sleep problems or just feeling hopeless. Call a professional, and get help. You will feel better and so will those who care about you.

**Take hold of your stressors and turn them around to work for you instead of against you.**

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# *The Power of Positive Thinking*

Putting a positive twist to your way of thinking can reduce stress, increase your immune system, and build your resiliency. Research has shown that the effects of positive thinking can increase your life expectancy, lower depression, increase life satisfaction, and lower your chances of death due to cardiovascular disease.



**Ask yourself “is this glass half empty or half full? “**

**Your answer will shed light into your overall perception of life and how you feel about yourself.**

**If you are more on the pessimistic side (half empty), STOP**

1. **Catastrophizing**; automatically anticipate the worse. Instead: Substitute the negative outcome in your mind for a positive one.
2. **Personalizing**; When something bad happens, you automatically blame yourself. Instead: Quit thinking everything bad revolves around you. It doesn't.
3. **Filtering**; Magnifying the negative aspects of a situation and “filtering out” the positives. Instead: Focus on the positives, and how what you have learned can change outcomes in the future.
4. **Polarizing**; Things are either good or bad, black or white, etc. There is no grey. Instead: Accept the fact that you are not a failure, just because you are not perfect. No one is perfect. Things are not always black and white. There is often a “grey zone.”

**Turn your negative thoughts into positive ones. Put a new spin on your way of thinking.**

**Welcome humor in you life daily** Laughing produces endorphins (“feel good” chemicals) in your brain.

**Follow a healthy lifestyle.** Exercise at least 3 x/wk, eat a well balanced diet, learn how to relax and handle stress.

**Surround yourself with positive people.** Attitudes are contagious. Catch a positive one instead of a negative one

**Talk to yourself; POSITIVELY.** Don't say anything to yourself you wouldn't say about a friend; without hurting their feelings.

**Practicing positive self talk will improve your outlook on life. Those who have a more optimistic outlook on life, tend to handle everyday stress more constructively than those who do not.**

Read more about this topic at [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

## *Life Stress Test*

Death of spouse 100	Divorce 73	Marital separation 65	Jail term 63	Death of close family member 63	Personal injury or ill- ness 53
Marriage 50	Being fired 47	Marital reconciliation 45	Retirement 45	Health change of family member 44	Pregnancy 40
Sexual difficulties 39	Having a baby 39	Change in finances 38	Death of close friend 37	New line of work 36	Increased fighting with spouse 35
Large mortgage 31	Foreclosure 31	Son or daughter leaving home 30	In law troubles 29	Spouse starts or stops work 26	Begin or end school 26
Trouble with boss 23	Moving into new home 20	Change in sleeping habits 16	Change in eating habits 16	Vacation 13	Total:_____

Add the numbers next to each stressful life event below.

Here are the ANSWERS

If you score more than 200, you have a 50% chance of becoming seriously ill from stress. If you score 300 or more, your chance increases to 80%.

## STRESS BUSTERS

### POSITIVE COPING RESPONSES

1. Listening to music
2. Playing with a pet
3. Going out with a friend (shopping, movie, dining)
4. Laughing or crying
5. Take a bath or a shower
6. Writing, painting, creative activity
7. Praying or going to church
8. Exercising or getting outdoors to enjoy nature
9. Talking with a friend or spouse
10. Gardening or making home repairs
11. Deep breathing, meditation, relaxation

### STAY AWAY FROM:

#### NEGATIVE COPING RESPONSES

1. Criticizing yourself (negative self-talk)
2. Driving fast in a car
3. Chewing your fingernails
4. Becoming aggressive or violent (hitting someone, throwing or kicking something)
5. Eating too much or too little or drinking a lot of coffee
6. Smoking or chewing tobacco
7. Drinking alcohol
8. Yelling at your spouse, children, or friends
9. Taking a recreational drug to calm yourself
10. Avoiding social contact

# Did you know there is a form of depression that is influenced by the light ?

## It is called Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD.

This form of depression is shorter in duration than other forms of depression. However it still can disrupt normal life. The lack of energy and depression can hinder the ability to [work](#) at a job and weaken [relationships](#) with others. According to the American [Family Physician Journal](#), 0.4 to 9.7 percent of Americans may have Seasonal Affective Disorder and prevalence may increase in northern climates

Symptoms often start building up in late fall or winter. It often occurs around the same time each year. Some people call it Cabin Fever or the Winter Blues.

## Some Symptoms of this form of depression may include:

- Afternoon slumps with decreased energy and concentration
- [Increased appetite](#) with weight gain (weight loss is more typical of other forms of depression)
- Increased sleep and [excessive daytime sleepiness](#) (problems sleeping are more typical of other forms of depression)
- Lack of energy and loss of interest in work or other activities
- Slow, sluggish, [lethargic](#) movement
- Social withdrawal

- Unhappiness and Irritability

## Prevention/Solution

Seasonal affective disorder may be treated with traditional anti-depressants or with alternative therapy. Taking long walks during the daylight hours and getting exercise can make the symptoms better. Keep active socially, even if it involves some effort.

The most popular form of alternative therapy for seasonal affective disorder is the use of a light box. Morning use of a light box may reduce the symptoms of winter seasonal affective disorder. Another alternate therapy is use of a dawn simulator to awaken in the morning. \*\* Do not use a light box without first discussing it with your physician.

Read more: [Seasonal Affective Disorder | eHow.com](#)

[U.S. National Library of Medicine](#)

[NIH](#) [National Institutes of Health](#)

## What Causes Brain Freeze?

When nerves in the roof of your mouth are cooled, the blood vessels in your head dilate in an attempt to keep your brain warm. This dilation causes an ice cream headache also known as brain freeze.



## *The Lucky Number 7*

The number “7” is sometimes referred to as a magic number.

It is the number of items that our brains can remember at any given moment. This is the reason that telephone numbers are 7 digits long.

The number 7 is also important with regard to our social support networks. In her book *The Shelter of Each Other*, Mary Pipher discusses the importance of social support. She states “years ago a sociologist postulated that there was a critical number of social contacts that a person needed every week to stay sane. He speculated that unless seven familiar people ‘interacted’ with the person, he or she would be at risk for mental illness.”

Recent research has demonstrated that social support networks alone can significantly reduce the likelihood of developing depression or PTSD. Because being a National Guard service member is often isolating, the importance of identifying those individuals who provide social and emotional support is critical in building resilience.

**Exercise to Identify Social Support:**

- Think of individuals with whom you spend time, whether at work or at play.
- Make a list of each individual.
- By each person’s name, list 1 or 2 words that describe how the person supports you.

If you have more than 7 names, great! You have a strong social support network.

If you have less than 7 names, don’t worry – your assignment throughout the next month is to get to know new people and to add individuals to your social support network.

***In seeking wisdom thou art wise;  
In imagining that thou hast attained it - thou art a fool.***

***— Lord Chesterfield***

*Resiliency is a newsletter for service members and their families. Feedback is welcomed and encouraged. If there are subjects, concerns, or questions you have about issues dealing with mental wellness, please let me know.*

*Happy Holidays  
Syd Davidson (sydney.davidson@us.army.mil)*



## *Month of December*

National Awareness Month

National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month,

**SADD**; Students Against Destructive Decisions Month



## *RESOURCES*

National Crisis and Suicide Hotline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
National VA Hotline	1-800-273-8255
Military One Source	1-800-342.9647
Joint Operations Center	1-800-237-2850
Joint Services Support	<a href="http://www.jointservicessupport.org">www.jointservicessupport.org</a>
Find Treatment; Substance Abuse and Mental Health	<a href="http://dasis3.samhsa.gov">http://dasis3.samhsa.gov</a>
Mental Health Association Indiana	<a href="http://www.mhai.net">www.mhai.net</a>
Recovery Indiana	<a href="http://www.recoveryindiana.org">www.recoveryindiana.org</a>
USA Cares	<a href="http://usacares.org">http://usacares.org</a>
U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine	<a href="http://phc.amedd.army.mil">http://phc.amedd.army.mil</a> (CHIPPM)
Military One Source	<a href="http://www.militaryonesource.com">www.militaryonesource.com</a>
Air Force Crossroads	<a href="http://www.afcrossroads.com">http://www.afcrossroads.com</a>
Army Times	<a href="http://www.armytimes.com">http://www.armytimes.com</a>
Military Times	<a href="http://www.militarytimes.com">www.militarytimes.com</a>
Real Warriors	<a href="http://www.realwarriors.net">www.realwarriors.net</a>
War Fighter Diaries	<a href="http://www.warfighterdiaries.com">http://www.warfighterdiaries.com</a>
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America	<a href="http://iava.org/">http://iava.org/</a>
Center for Deployment Psychology	<a href="http://deploymentpsych.net">http://deploymentpsych.net</a>
Defense Centers of Excellence	<a href="http://www.dcoe.health.mil">http://www.dcoe.health.mil</a>

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The mission of the National Guard Psychological Health Program is to advocate, promote, and guide National Guard members and their families by supporting psychological fitness for operational readiness. For contact information regarding the Director of Psychological Health in your state or territory or other resources, go to: [www.jointservicessupport.org](http://www.jointservicessupport.org).